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KEEPING FARM MACHINERY IN REPAIR

A radio talk by Stewart Leaming, County Agricultural Agent, Porter County, Indiana, delivered in the Land-Grant College radio program, April 17, 1935, and broadcast by a network of 49 associate NBC radio stations.

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Porter county is a highly developed agricultural community and many of the farms have heavy investments in up-to-date farm machinery. It is not strange that many of our farmers have given attention to the care of their machinery in order that they may keep down their operating costs.

Recently I visited with the Smoke Brothers, who are rated among Porter county's successful farmers. They take special pride in their full line of farm machinery. Along with more modern pieces of equipment, I saw a mower 39 years old, a binder 35 years old, a manure spreader, a hay rake and a hay loader each 29 years old. Each of these implements was in good condition and still in service.

"How do you keep your machinery in such good working order while others find it necessary to replace their equipment after a few years of service?" I asked.

"We protect our machinery from the weather when it is not in use," was the prompt reply. They went on to say that they had observed that rust and decay are the great enemies of farm machinery and that they have conquered these enemies by erecting rather simple and inexpensive sheds for their tools. They make it a rule to get each machine under roof just as soon as they are through using it and they find that this rule pays big dividends.

The next rule that they gave for keeping their machinery in repair is frequent and regular oiling of all bearings. They have found that all moving parts must be protected by oil if the usefulness of the machine is to be preserved and that neglect of the bearings may ruin a machine in a short time. They also make it a practice to go over the machine each day that it is in operation and keep the nuts tight and the working parts in alignment and working smoothly. They have found that the old adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" is especially true when it comes to keeping machinery in repair.

From watching them in the field, I have observed that these brothers have developed a certain skill in their farming operations which is partly responsible for the low machinery repair costs on the farm. They take a little extra care in driving through gates and lanes and in turning at the ends of the fields to avoid striking obstacles and thus twisting the machinery. They avoid, as much as possible, sudden starts and stops which throw an extra strain on machines and teams. They have gone to some trouble to remove stumps and rocks which might interfere with their operations. They expect a machine to perform the services for which it is intended but do not expect it to work

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beyond its capacity, as this shortens its life. In brief, their skill has enabled them to do a good job of farming with the least strain on themselves, their teams and their implements.

The Smoke Brothers make a practice of buying, so far as possible, only machines for which repairs can be obtained locally or within a few hours time. They do not place too much reliance in an emergency, on machines for which repairs are not available, as they have discovered that if a machine is broken down and a crop is waiting to be harvested, any delay in making repairs may prove expensive.

At the end of the season, they make an inspection of each machine and order any repairs that may be needed, and make the replacements and adjustments during the slack season before the machine will be needed again.

These men keep on hand a supply of stock repairs so that replacements can be made quickly. During the winter months they saw out an extra supply of wagon and machine tongues, sills, reaches and materials for eveners. They place this lumber in the dry where it will season and be ready when it is needed. They also keep on hand, in home made cabinets, extra supplies of machine bolts, cotter pins, washers, shims, drive chain links and rivets, and thus save trips to town and speed up repair jobs.

They consider their simple machine shop one of the important buildings on the farm. It is equipped with a forge, an anvil, a drill, tool grinder, a stock with dies, and sets of hammers, wrenches, punches and chisels. They also have a few special tools which enable them to care for nearly all of the repair jobs that they encounter, except acetelyne welding.

The Smoke Brothers are typical of a large and growing class of men who keep down machinery repair costs through careful operation and a knowledge of repair methods.

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